

**Belmont Human Rights Commission
Belmont Town Hall
June 4, 2009**

Meeting Notes

Members Present: Nan Donald, Judie Feins, Connie Williams, Fran Yuan
Members Absent: Lisa Bernt, Janet Cudmore-Boswell, Rosalind Kabrhel
Liaisons Present: Captain Peter Hoerr (Belmont Police Department)
Prospective Members Present: Julie Cicalese, Laura Panos
Member of the Public Present: John Vercellone

The meeting began at 7:10 pm

1. Fran Yuan presided and took notes. A quorum was present.
2. Fran reported there were no calls to the HRC phone line this month.
3. The April and May minutes were voted on and the draft versions were passed by the members present. They will be posted to the HRC webpage. As the town is redoing the website, we might look for a prominent way to list our phone number.
 - Further ways to publicize the HRC in the community were discussed. The webpage on the town website describes the HRC's purpose, membership, and phone number. The phone number can be put in the Belmont phone book next spring as the new version was recently distributed. Laura also agreed to write an article for the Citizen Herald about employee rights in employment termination in this current job climate. Nan suggested the town Yahoo elist.
5. Fran agreed to put an announcement in the Belmont Citizen Herald this week and email interested parties who put their names on a mailing list at Town Day seeking two new HRC members. We currently have: Lisa Bernt, Nan Donald, Connie Williams, and Fran Yuan who will continue their terms. Lisa Panos, Julie Cicalese, and Paul Solomon have all indicated to the Board of Selectmen that they would like to be appointed to the commission in June. This will leave two more openings which we hope to have filled in June. Julie mentioned asking a Chinese friend about her interest in being on the HRC but the woman felt her English was not good enough.
6. Fran also agreed to contact liaison groups for new representatives to be appointed.
7. Fran introduced the Welcoming Communities Checklist which Judie brought to the meeting last month. The checklist was based on a presentation by David Harris, Managing Director of the Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard. We went through the items listed.

We discussed having speakers and using local media more.

We discussed priorities for upcoming year. In the past, housing was a focus. John asked about housing for veterans. Judie said that the Housing Authority gives veterans preference for housing.

Fran said that some discussion have focused on immigrants at MAHRC meetings. Lisa has been attending them lately, and Laura suggested we rotate going to the

monthly MAHRC meetings if possible.

Peter mentioned that sometimes drivers were stopped and did not have a license because they couldn't legally obtain them due to their immigration status. There was a risk of ticketing or charging the wrong person when people didn't use legitimate identification.

Julie asked about language difficulties among immigrants and agreed to research adult ESL programs in Belmont, Watertown.

3 Fran mentioned the August 20th Meet Belmont event at the high school from 6-8 pm. She said she could set up an HRC table. Julie also said she might be able to attend.

9. Fran also asked if the HRC would like to be involved in the One Book One Belmont program as a co-sponsor. The book, *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral*, by Barbara Kingsolver is the selection. While it doesn't have much to do with human rights per se, the group voted to be a co-sponsor. As it is also the 150th anniversary of the town incorporation, Fran suggested we could consider sponsoring a town potluck featuring ethnic foods. Many anniversary events will focus on the town's agricultural history.
10. Peter reported that he attended the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom training, which he found out about through one of our emails. The trainer was Sha'am Mouliert. There were a number of exercises presented and a video about white privilege.
11. Julie mentioned a book that might be worth reading: *It's the Little Things: Everyday Interactions that Anger, Annoy, and Divide the Races* by Lena Williams, about the beliefs people of all races have and what's behind it. Fran suggested it might be a good thing to write a book review about for the local newspaper.
12. Julie also asked about whether the commission had ever conducted a needs assessment. We described the initial survey we had done, but she thought maybe we might ask for more specifics, such as a need for ESL, etc. The program Survey Monkey is easy to use on-line.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.